

CALVERT



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— *Steven Young*

Warriors

in the war dance
we circled
until there was no body
and no body
being
tied with a thread
to the burning dust
and the ragged grass
our eyes
not ours
our eyes
in the war dance
we circled
until there was no body
and no body
being
tied with a thread
to the burning dust
and the ragged grass

— *Kurt Kuss*

Museum Tour

I.

Marble slips forward
and back, forcing an eyelid
or purse of lip into
the core of the century. A
child, on tip toe, hands anchored
on the pedestal, challenges
the Grecian face, stone for stone.

II.

Water rakes coiled shell
and sand, reaches the only apex it can hope for
and retreats, cracking against the current.
The sun bores its rays into
white flecks on coral, crystal sand
and the eye of the seagull,
silhouetted in the sky
like chimes against the window.

III.

Baroque Jesus tears diagonal
into the confusion of the cross
raisers. By human power must
he be planted on the hill. No
longer can his arms fold
to complete the embrace.

IV.

A night flashes on the brink
of a mind that churns and spirals
in strokes on a linen page.
Star storm sky plots across
the composer's manuscript
frozen in pigment's rage.

V.

Broken room, black and white,
whose slaughter as through a prism
slashes witness eyes to vision.

Women hold murdered children to
diffuse back their lives. Theirs
is a horse's horror, stampeding
into painted corners. The light
is only betrayal; colorless
it illuminates the not dead yet.

VI.

One comfortable evening, couched
in red of lamplight, the sturdy
mahogany, the field around irises,
Only the black is constant, white etched
by the absinthe.

Do you sit yet
in the smoke of oils that
congeal on palettes, sprung
to impressions on canvas woven
by linen and solitary time
passed liquid in a bar?

— *Laura Dickinson*

A Shorter 'War and Peace'

— *Mitchell Coffey*

Place: Moscow;

Date: 1806;

Scene: A party.

Pierre stands on window ledge far above the street. It is on a dare. He drinks entire bottle of vodka, yet keeps his balance.

Napoleonic agent in back of room sneezes. Pierre starts, loses balance, falls; lands on Natasha and Andre, who just happen to be passing below. All are killed. Novel ends.



— *Gerry Hinds*

Grace

From *Down to Earth*, a novel-in-progress.

— Joyce Kornblatt

Last night I woke a dozen times from dreams of Justin dying.

Finally, at four a.m., I abandoned the bed, pulled on a robe, creaked past the children's rooms and down the stairs to the small backyard patio. I had built it myself with bricks I salvaged last summer from neighborhood demolition sites. I lugged home trunkloads of fallen walls and chimney ruins. On a bed of sand, the children helped me lay the vintage stones in a pattern we designed together. This morning, in the pre-dawn darkness, I sat in a green canvass butterfly chair and waited for the sun to begin its dependable transit over the yard. By six, I felt calm again, the nightmare images gone. Daylight had arrived.

In the past, I might have spent the morning phoning Justin, or fighting the impulse to do so. No longer. Dreams may be prophetic, but if Justin is in danger, it is not a situation from which I can rescue him. Danger is an attitude about life which he himself generates. I think of the spider producing in its own body the substance it spins into webs. Justin believes he's fooled me, believes I accept his declarations that he has given up political "missions" as they are referred to in his circle. Can the spider give up web-making? It is how he gets his food. It is what he does.

We begin our vocations in childhood, each one of us prodigies of a sort. Sometimes my former husband's life appears to me like a film, a sequence of scenes that comprise the narrative of his life. Waiting for the sun's arrival this morning, I told myself his story, as I tell stories to Lisa and Zach. Once upon a time. And then, and then, and then. Ask the children: no matter how many monsters, catastrophes, curses emerge in the course of the telling, the telling itself is a solace. And then, and then, and then. Salvaged memories I lug home, lay before me in a pattern I can understand.

Although he was Rose's second child, his birth was harder for her than Karl's had been. "You'd have thought he didn't want to be born," she told me once, "the fight he put up." From the first, they were embattled.

And Wendell did not like babies at all. They were messy, unruly, creatures of intense and unpredictable moods. Even placid Karl had confused him, but this second caterwauling son was a threat to civilization as it was represented by Wendell Fry's household. Justin's infancy was a siege to be endured, waited out.

Karl was no less disturbed by Justin's arrival. A quiet, methodical five-year old, unnerved by the chaos other children seemed to call "play," his bedroom had become a haven for him in which imaginary playmates read books, pasted stamps into albums, pushed matchstick cars silently across the rug like sedate drivers out for a Sunday drive in the country. In 1973, when Justin was twenty-eight and going through drug withdrawal, Karl came to visit him on the ward. Justin had fallen into a deep slumber after a morning of bone-grinding pain, tremors, hallucinations. He was ashen, thin, fragile-looking as an old man, as an infant. Karl wept at the sight of his brother. "We were never friends," he said, "we were always at odds." He stared at Justin's worn-out body. I could have mistaken Karl for the one who was hallucinating. "The day my parents brought him home from the hospital," he said, "he cried all night long." He spoke as if that one fact somehow explained everything that had followed.

Some of what followed:

Rose: "One afternoon when he was in second grade, he didn't come home for lunch like he should. Here I'd just brought him through a week of strep throat and fever and worrying that it would go to his heart — isn't strep the one that can go to your heart? — and now I'm facing hit-and-run or kidnapping or — well, you can imagine the places my mind was travelling. Ever since Karl had been in the first grade, lunchtime had been the same. At eleven-thirty, I'd set up the bridge table in the parlor, put on a cloth, and make the boys their sandwiches. Boiled ham was their favorite, or sometimes I'd fix soup. Justin was partial to Campbell's tomato with some of them oysterette crackers mixed in. So I'd have lunch all fixed and when they came in at noon, we'd be all ready to watch the stories. 'Search for Tomorrow' and 'The Guiding Light,' we watched them religiously, first me and Karl and Justin, then just me and Justin when Karl was off in junior high and eating in the cafeteria. By twelve-thirty and still no sign of my youngest son, I was so nervous I was nearly asleep. This is what happens to me when I'm scared, I don't get jumpy like some, I go still. Everything inside me loses power. I swear my blood itself slows down. But I managed to put on my shoes and sweater and walk the seven blocks to Grover Cleveland Elementary School. I was in a trance, that's how sleepy I was, I must have looked brainwashed or hypnotized, walking into that empty building right into the principal's office and saying to the secretary there, 'Something terrible has happened to my son, Justin Fry.' 'You mean on the second-grade picnic?' she says, rising up in alarm behind her Remington. 'You mean an accident on the bus?' I sank down on the wooden bench under the big clock. 'I didn't know about any picnic, I — ' 'Well, your boy called you this morning, Mrs. Fry, right from this phone, came to get your permission since he'd been out sick last week and didn't know. . . I mean, I heard him talk to you, Mrs. Fry, with my own ears.' 'Not to me,' I said, suffering that wave of disloyalty that sweeps through you when you disclaim kin. 'I was over at the church all morning, working on the centerpieces for the Youth Group dinner this coming Saturday night.' Just then we hear a rumble in the schoolyard. The bus wheels whip up dust like a flurry of chickens under attack. Mustering up outrage, I march outside and watch the children disembark, Justin one of the last to come through the door. I'm standing there like a policeman, but do you think he's quaking or shamed at the sight of me? No. Justin Fry, grinning for all he's worth, fingers raised in V-for-Victory salutes, enters that sun-dazzled schoolyard like a regular hero just back from the war.

"Right then I knew: he was outside my mothering. When I was a girl, my daddy bought me a magnet and I loved to sit down with a bunch of nails and place them in a circle. Then I'd put the magnet in the middle and watch the nails move into the center. I'd make the circle bigger and bigger, looking for the point where the magnet didn't have a hold on those nails anymore. When I saw Justin get off the bus that day, I saw he hadn't gone off to spite me at all. No, what had happened was graver than that. He had slipped beyond the pull of the magnet that's smack in the center of every family. A child gets out too far, he can feel himself as much an orphan as one whose Mama and Daddy have truly died. I tried to explain it to Wendell that night, but he wouldn't hear a word of it. 'That boy is going to turn into a juvenile delinquent, Rose, you keep coming up with theories like that every time he transgresses.' He gave him fifteen whacks with a hairbrush and sent him to bed without his dinner. We never did see eye to eye on bringing children up."

In Rose's surrender to Wendell, Justin's accusation resides:

"She's a double agent, baby. Best in the business. It took me years to figure out that lady's scam. " Whenever Justin got his father's fifteen whacks, Rose ran the

water full-force in the kitchen to drown out the sound of the hairbrush blows; Justin never cried when Wendell punished him.

Karl: "I never wanted to learn to drive — Florence insisted I do after we married — but Justin announced shortly after his fifteenth birthday, 'Six months and I get my learner's permit.' It was Sunday; we had just finished supper and Mother was scraping food scraps off the plates as she cleared the table.

" 'Garbage,' said Father.

"Mother said, 'Of course, Wendell. You think I'd use these bits for food or something? I'm not that frugal.'

"He winced. 'Not you,' he said. 'Justin. Learner's permit.'

"His meaning had not been lost on me or my brother, and perhaps Mother herself was simply deflecting Father from his intended line. Justin twisted his napkin into a rope. He hunched down in his chair as if he were ready to fling himself like an arrow across the table to Father's place.

" 'What's wrong with my learning to drive,' he said, and it was less a question than an accusation.

" 'I don't approve of parents putting their children into contraptions known for their ability to kill and maim. The statistics prove that —'

" 'Fuck your statistics!' Justin screamed. He lunged forward, knocking over a glass of water. A stain spread across the tablecloth. 'I don't give a damn —'

" 'Silence!' roared Father, on his feet now. Mother fluttered around them like a wounded bird, her hands flapping in the air they each occupied.

" 'Wendell, your pressure! Justin, he's only looking out for —'

" 'For his precious car and you know it!' Then he was gone, so fast it seemed he'd evaporated on the spot. The apartment door slammed behind him, proving he'd taken his body with him.

" 'I don't know any such thing,' said Mother, her voice small, appealing to Justin as if he were still with us in the room."

When I met Justin in 1969, he had graduated a few months before from Howard Law School, one of the few whites in his class. "I liked the flip," he said. "I didn't want to go somewhere like U. Va. where you get all caught up in white elitist shit." He told me the only reason he'd gone to law school at all was because he believed his legal training would help him stay out of jail and help him get out friends who were already imprisoned. "Think of me as a jailhouse lawyer. Don't kid yourself that I'll turn respectable in a few years and start raking it in from rich old broads who want big alimony settlements. You'll never get a house in the suburbs from me, Gracie." I told him I did not want a house in the suburbs, which was a lie, but a lie I believed I could convert into the truth, which I did.

Before Howard, Justin had spent eighteen months in anti-war work. Rallies, speechmaking in Boston Commons, DuPont Circle, People's Park in Berkeley. Across the country on campus after campus, recruiting students into the Movement. He was a celebrity, a name. Justin Fry. He had what the media called "a high recognition quotient." Although he'd bounced from one college to another, barely graduating from his last matriculation in Long Beach, California, the *L.A. Times* called Justin "one of the best minds of the radical Left, his anger grounded in rigorous analysis, his arguments persuasive because of their substance as much as their style."

Anti-war work. Apolitical myself, I liked the sound of it, the Quaker connotations. I thought of Gandhi. Six months after we met, we were living together in my rowhouse near the zoo. My once cloister-like abode became a communal home, a meeting place, an address staked out in the middle of the night by *Post*

reporters and F. B. I. agents and members of the Neo-Nazi party. In 1971, I married Justin Fry one day after work. He picked me up at the hospital, we had dinner at a Thai restaurant we went to often (the prices were cheap, the owner a quiet admirer of Ho Chi Minh) and then we drove to Baltimore, where a minister-friend of the Berrigans conducted a brief ceremony in his living room while a mimeograph machine clacked away in the basement and our witnesses were two strangers who had just hitched into the city that morning to work on the demonstration planned for the weekend. A year later, in 1972, Justin denied under oath that he had provided phony driver's licences and birth certificates to a number of radicals who claimed responsibility for a number of bombings. (I knew this and did not know it. I kept thinking of Ghandi.) In 1972, Justin was tried for perjury, convicted, and the judge, rather than sending him to jail, ordered him to Sibley Hospital for psychotherapy and detoxification treatments. Justin was addicted to amphetamines and Tolwin, a painkiller he'd gotten for an impacted wisdom tooth and continued to take, in daily doses, for other kinds of pain, not all of them physical. The judge also ordered five years' probation and barred Justin from all political activity. "Well shit," Justin said, "I wanted to organize my cell block."

From the beginning, he was embattled. ("You'd have thought he didn't want to be born, the fight he put up.")

"I don't think you want to get yourself mixed up with me, Gracie. I'm a minefield," he told me at the start.

When he went into the hospital, he forbade me to take him, forbade me to visit. "It isn't pretty. Stay home, dammit." I came. "Who do you think you are, Florence Nightengale?" he said, and wept. Ten days later, the shaking and delusions and fever gone, the psychiatrist confided "he's turned himself around," Justin came home.

"Question," he said to me one night in bed. "Where can a one-time speed freak, defrocked attorney, over-the-hill agitator find work in America today?"

"Wall Street," I said.

"No openings."

"The CIA."

"They wanted me for Director, but I turned them down."

"I give up."

"The Second Story."

I flipped on the lamp. "You're going to work in a bar?"

"Who's the funniest man you know?"

"Bill Cosby."

"The funniest *white* man."

"Woody Allen."

"Grace."

"What."

"I am the funniest white man you know. Justin Fry. Larry Kramer offered me a job there, try it out for a few weeks. Thursday nights."

"You're going to be a comedian in a bar?"

"I can do a lot of good stuff there, political stuff. You get a very conscious crowd there."

He looked triumphant. You would have thought it was 1968, thousands hanging on his words, rather than one worried wife he was trying to reassure.

"I guess for awhile it could be good for you. Until you figure out —"

"Nothing more to figure out, babe!" He grinned like a boy. "Justin Fry's comedy career begins officially this week, folks. Revolution is too fucking *hard*. I'll joke them out of capitalism. This is just the beginning, Gracie." He was standing

up in bed. "I — want — to — be — a — Comm — u — nist!" he belted, as if they were the lyrics to a Broadway song.

It took me less than four months to understand that The Second Story was Justin's cover, that his "work" had moved from Vietnam to Latin American disappearances, torture, imprisonments. For a while, he believed his work was a secret I did not know. Did he believe that either of us could ever have secrets from the other? I know Justin's slightest gesture, my eyes and hands have memorized the subtle language of his body, I have decoded his dreams and translated his terrors and he has mastered me with equal precision. I have always cherished that closeness. But Justin sees it as infiltration, each of us sneaking like guerrillas into the other's interior. "Why are you so afraid of intimacy?" I'd say in the early years, and he'd counter, "Intimacy doesn't *feed* people, Gracie. In a truly humane society, you'd be obsolete, we wouldn't need social workers at all. You've got the whole thing backwards, baby, you're coming at it from the wrong end." He gave me Marcuse to read, and Marx, and Ivan Illyich. He gave me Cleaver and Baldwin and Malcolm X. He gave me Thoreau on civil disobedience . . .

You can see the pattern. I could string together a different set of scenes, lay out other stones in the design, but still you could see the pattern. A brilliant student who barely made it through college, an altruistic idealist capable of cynicism and cruelty, a loving man consumed with hatred, an egotist given to bouts of self-destruction and self-pity, a husband to me long after we divorced, a devoted father who scorns all notions of family. It adds up to this: *And then, and then, and then*. Does any life offer up more order than that?



—Rhonda Williams

Adagio

There is only enough time
to say this:

the floor falls away, and in a dream
the stage fills with rising starlights
becomes a realm of unfound motion
dances waiting for dancers.

And here, for just this second
you find the grace of your veins
laced with the light.

Some simple magic or alchemy
unfurls pure spirit out of bone
exalts the body on an inner wind
and holds it poised, poised

and you are home. But see, already
already the sky is turning again.
You feel a half-forgotten pain pulse
through your legs like a struck bell
as the toe of your shoe meets
the floor, the strange constant ache
of gravity. But you are more grave
than anything else
remember?

We each have a shadow.
Hurry dancer, this is yours—
deep hate, deep love for the floor.

— *Lisa McCullough*



— Margo Fisher

Dwellings

Hers

I can say that the whole room
belongs to me, that I framed and
hung the prints of my own choice,
that the plants only live because
I water them. The couple underneath
me plays the music that I sleep
to; in the morning, I wash
a single plate, one cup.

My neighbor on this floor keeps
a parrot — green and yellow, where
I'd wish for only white. As she
comes up the stairs at night I hear
him call her favorite phrases back
to her. She hurries to bring him
food, spends too much time trying
to teach him words. I don't believe
that he makes sense of what he says.

I hoped I would find Christ
across the hall — instead I have
this woman, her ordinary bird.
Here I feed nothing, rehearse my
lines alone, and when the floor
collects too many strands of hair
I sweep them out. She needs to
hear her language and to think
her parrot loves her, waits
for her to come home.

His

Last night I stayed up late,
pried the frets off my guitar,
piled another unread stack of books
against the wall. Drinking tea
too much is a habit I can't stop,
though lately I spill half of what I make.

But I clean up. You'd be surprised
how fast I make things right, how little
time I waste in drying steak knives
wiping spoons. What you hear about —
the black cloth on my furniture,
the blank paper that I buy and then don't
use — doesn't mean that I grow careless,
but I protect, and save, and wait.

When you visit, I'll plant weeds
in fine ceramic pots, show the candle
I keep lit by your side of the bed,
write "spit" and "succor" on the wall
if you should try to talk. I'll line
your new lovers up outside the door,
offer each one some bread, a piece of fruit —
then I'll scratch their names into the sidewalk
and warn the tenants not to drink the water.

— *Rose Solari*



Road Not The Taken

"A poem may be worked over once
it is in being,...It can never
lose its sense of a meaning that
once unfolded by surprise as it
went."

— *Robert Frost*

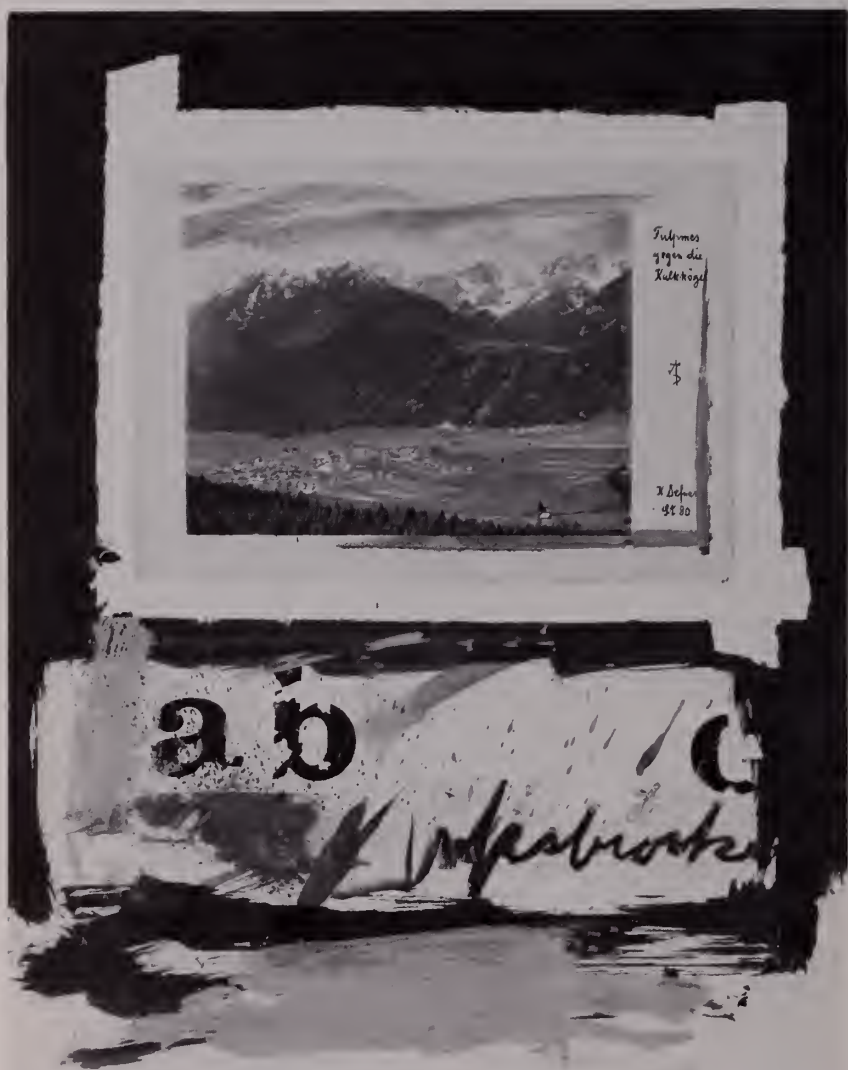
diverged Two yellow roads a wood in
I both not sorry could travel And
traveler, stood And long, I be one
one And as I could far looked as down
in the undergrowth; To where it bent

just as fair, Then took the other, as
better claim, having the perhaps And
wear; wanted grassy it was Because and
passing Though as the that for there
them about really the same, worn Had

And lay that morning equally both
step black. In leaves had trodden no
kept day! Oh, another for first the I
leads way, Yet on how knowing to way
ever should I back. if come I doubted

be I shall with sigh telling this a
ages hence: ages and Somewhere
Two a wood, in roads I — diverged and
I took one by, the less traveled
the difference. And that made has all

— *Jay Dougherty*



— Marcie Wolf

Requiem for Genesis

An eggshell crack
of a dawn,
not-so rosy fingers
drawn
across a face
four months now

mileage counter
moments
tick by
each restless
tawny hour
on the highway

outside
snow snakes across
the road
like salt
blown over glass
while the tyres
hum a steady beat,
a requiem,
for genesis

— *Pete Dodge*

Untitled

felt good, dry hard ground
a familiar movement of pavement

saw the land rise and fall
(today)
heard tires screech
brilliant sun shine on metal
as it slams into more metal
bodies wrench

people stood by
on dry hard ground

— *J. Steven Taylor*

In Memory of Eugene O'Neill

He let the mainsail out, and fell off the wind.
The boat came up from its heel, quickened.
Quiet then, only the hissing reminder of motion
itself, the stability of a blur. He knew
he was not a sailboat, and must
lean into himself; he must be something
unnatural like a home
and how it holds the weight of all those people.

The sun coming off the water was a release,
autumn splinters, fish dying, a Greek tragedy;
this was a fall he could handle, a recorded history
playing over and over again, a rehearsal.

God has fallen, he said to himself, and this was
the grey silky sky he beat his boat into relentless.
He thought of God's chin, jutting forward, ruddy and unshaven,
drowning, alcoholic, drinking itself
into a lake where tourists go
because they say it is bottomless.
The sky is bottomless, he thought.

— *David Swerdlow*



— *Roger Allen*

Scenes in a Park

How was it God's intent
to use this common
ground?

1

On a day giddy with light
lovers frolic then follow
a crooked path separate as epochs:
fidelity is out of fashion.

2

The rutted lane in a green field
browning yields to Pan
in stilled abandon.
The tarnished head overwritten with ivy
is no wiser for his vigilance.

3

Cottoned beyond the reach of jeers
she blunders to my side.
Laved in smiles each day
she gets off at the wrong station
carrying cinders in paper bags.
Does she parody what she cannot remember?

4

The patriarch branded by passers-by
wearing a lamplight in his eyes
decries, "How may I know
the righteous who raised
no hand?" For him, no love
can heal the tattoo of blue numbers.

5

Small sounds stutter as I track geese
rise to winter's call,
then bound for home, a shared bed.
I did not invent grief.

— Ruth Abramowitz

Toll Booth

I wonder how long it's been now
watching time punch hard
at the air's yellowed teeth
and waiting, just waiting
for the funnel to suck
into its tiled esophagus the fumes of steel

I think back
back on the stippled craters of an
oiled man's face, slapped by the jet of his hair
clamped on his stogied tobacco
licking his palm and saddling
his change into mine

while his other calloused hand gripped
the formed notches in the wheel
the wife hard staring at her teak layer
pinching a snatch of hair in the rear mirror
behind her ear listening
for the pull of her daughter's face earthen
as fired pottery

I glanced trying to
fix on a stained blur through the vent window
the blue of American steel framing her moist stare
but it channeled into the one lane narrowness
deep into the open throat of the river

and I wonder, just how long it's been now
watching the oiled eyes of the clock
watching its hands curl into fists, knuckling the iron gusts
and the funnel still breathing

— *David Petersen*



— Stanley Wong

Snow

The wind is steep and near. Come snow.
The children wait for you. They say
The earth will drop and fill in white.
They wait for you tonight, for you

The dimensions of the sky loosen and start to slip out
No longer pasted together with light.
The bottomless side has already fallen

The snow lowers in slants.
Like a crate it leans
And claps onto the earth

— *Albert Kapikian*



— *Margo Fisher*

Anchor Bolt

I secure
this house

to its foundations
without me

nothing stays
on course

I am afraid
to say it

but I feel
the wood

around me
shake

at times

— *Saundra Maley*

The Dream of Incest

A child's
play, a theatre
the stage a memory, a single
strand of light that is
unravelling on a window and he
recognizing the design
of his sister, facing him
in the cool reflections of trees,
(She carries her eyes in a lavender jar
hidden— as if they had been stolen from
some other face) he asks himself,
What couldn't I have forgiven her?
Even the accident of our name...

Although the doors have all been painted shut
and the house of their childhood laid
lower each year, beneath the maples,
he has not passed beyond
the narrow shadow of his body
still fingering that landscape
for an answer— he wants to know
Shouldn't the clock hands have stopped
holding on that way to their numbers?
and he remembers (she can not think outloud
she told him once, there's nothing there
a catalogue of muted colors, all things
are starless now, she said
I know the darkness
is outside because I am
against the wall that keeps it there)

It was late that summer, the night
the rain light draped about the house
as if it had been staged when
antlers of lightning sprang out
from the center of the tree and all
the little lamps inside came all at once
undone and she, pulling her slip up
over her head (then she
wore it like a wedding veil)

— *Cynthia Matsakis-Anderson*



— *Gerry Hinds*

Eclipse

Today
there is talk on the plains.
Listen.

The wind is slandering the soil
and the faulty horizon.
The fields, in their beige uncertainty
whisper accusations
to clouds, who believe
anything.

And weeds,
pretending to be roses,
secretly mourn the moon.

— *Kim Chappell*



— *Donn Starr*

Why I Like Animals

—Ray Sikes

There was something nice about a dog being there. He had come in to get out of the rain and sat on the floor of the meeting lodge of a church retreat camp, as dry as any deacon on a Sunday morning. And he looked just as attentively as a deacon at the preacher who vigorously denounced the pitfalls of pharisaical religion. Suddenly, a great rolling of thunder shook the room. Rain gusted against the windows with a nervous pattering.

"Amen. God's confirming His Word," the preacher said. A low concerted chuckle rose from the congregation. By now the dog had risen and stood, rigid as sculpture, his ears raised with terror. He bounded over several sets of folded feet and settled his massive body (he was an Irish Setter) beneath my folding chair.

"It's okay there boy," I said, giving him a conciliatory scratch behind the ear.

"You must have a good spirit," the young woman beside me whispered.

"I hope so," I replied as we settled back into our Bibles and scrawled notes about Pharisees in the pages' margins. As the sermon progressed, I kicked my shoes off (I didn't think Jesus would mind) and absent-mindedly ran my naked feet across the setter's back, wiggling my toes through his thick, reddish hair. He made a noise like a sigh and flattened out on the floor, closing his eyes with apparent and consuming peace.

"I didn't know you loved animals," the girl beside me remarked.

"I don't. I just like 'em." Turning and looking into her eyes, which remind me of the Crystal River found in the book of Revelation, I said, "Love's a strong thing, something I reserve for God and people." She looked down, and slightly away, her eyelids blushing in a gentle flutter. Maybe she confused the word *love* with the top forty songs that blare from automobile dashboard speakers instead of relating it to I Corinthians 13. "Love is patient; love is kind; it never seeks its own..." I have never been able to muster very strong feelings toward animals. It probably has something to do with my childhood.

One day when I was about five, I sat on a chair in our kitchen, my tiny well polished shoes dangling above the linoleum. My mother stood behind me combing my hair, smearing generous amounts of hair tonic through my follicles. She used Lucky Tiger hair tonic, which had the consistency of motor oil and made my hair look like a plastic toupee sitting high above my ears on my large round head.

"I don't like that stuff, Mommy," I said with polite dissatisfaction.

"What stuff?"

"The stuff on my hair. It makes bugs chase me."

"That's just in your mind."

"NO, it's on it." It was true, something about the scent of Lucky Tiger drew insects to my skull like moths to a lightbulb.

"Well, you look like a nice young man," my mother insisted. "And who knows, maybe a big, pretty butterfly will land and stick. Then we'll press him like the ones we saw at the museum. Remember those?"

"Yes, Mommy."

"And then we'll glue him to a nice rock and make a paperweight. Do you know what that is?"

"Sure do," my father interrupted as he walked in. "It's a piece of junk that's good for nothing that you put on a stack of papers that you should have thrown away, and then you say that the junk's not junk anymore because it

sits there real pretty and works good as a PAPERWEIGHT." My father remains to this day an extremely practical man.

He stood against the refrigerator, wearing a pair of golashes and chewing on an unlit cigar. His raincoat was unzipped and hung from his shoulders like a mantle.

"Ready to go?" he asked.

"Umm-Hmm," I mouthed, dismounting the chair. My mother helped me to put on my bright yellow raincoat and matching hat, which misplaced not a single shellacked hair on my young tender head.

It was a short drive to the theatre where "Bambi" was playing. I walked close to my father in the crowd and then we sat together in the dark. His cigar bobbed as a shadow at the time the usher stopped by our seats and whispered, "Sir, I'm sorry but there's no smoking in the theatre."

"I know and I'm not," my father explained. "It's just a pacifier I suppose, and it doesn't smoke unless it's lit, which it isn't."

The usher leaned forward to study the cigar. "Fine, sir." He left, probably trying to figure out exactly where unlit cigars fit into the fire marshal's code.

"You like the picture, son?" my father asked from around his cigar.

"It's okay." I realized exactly at that moment that animal stories could never perform their melodramatic work within me. My father was a nice man, even if he did shoot Bambi's mother (he is an avid hunter). Walt Disney lied. I had been to the woods and saw Bambi and thumper for myself, and I knew that they didn't talk, but rather made animal noises and dashed about with instinctive chaotic motion. My father never murdered anyone. He just shot dinner.

When I got old enough to totter on the limbo-brink of adolescence, I began to hunt, just as my father did and his father before him. My first gun — a single shot Harrington and Richardson — was a Christmas present. I sat on the living room floor that holiday morning, beneath an aluminum foil tree (they were popular then) and lifted the gun to my shoulder. Imagined wild game cringed behind the barrel's beaded sight. Then I pointed the gun at the box of shotgun shells. They featured pleasing graphics; the concise fantastic lines of rustic adventure. Below the words REMINGTON 12 GAUGE SHOT SHELLS was a picture of a rabbit that bore absolutely no resemblance to Thumper. In its state of frozen mutation it stood stretching from its rear legs forward, locked in a stance not of retreat, but rather one of attack, as if about to bounce upon the unwary hunter and begin gnawing him from toe to head like an unfortunate garden vegetable.

The next day my father and I drove to the country, past the hard-frozen rows of cultivation, down the tire-rutted log roads of my father's childhood, to the dark forests and swamps which promised wild game. When the road had narrowed sufficiently to please him, my father pulled our 1960 Pontiac Starchief to the side. Our car was the sea green color of tile in the restrooms of unremodeled seafood restaurants and I gazed hypnotically at its sweeping tailfin while he opened the trunk. I daydreamed of fishing and hunting and manhood; surely I would shoot some animal that would become dinner and thereby complete a great mystical link between man and earth.

We loaded our guns and walked down the ditchbank. My father was the first into the muddy water and halfway through he stopped and turned to face me.

"It's deeper than I thought," his words were cramped by a fist-sized wad of chewing tobacco. Turning his mump-faced head slightly away, as if to be polite, he spat and returned his gaze. "Get on my back. I'll carry you."

"That's alright. I can make it myself."

"Sure you can, but you'll soak yourself trying. Go ahead and get on." He turned around and pointed at his back with his thumb. I climbed on, cradling my gun.

"Got the safety on?" he asked.

"It don't have one."

"You sure?" He stopped now and stood there with a troubled expression, as if thought and motion had split and whiled away in separate directions.

I scrutinized my gun. "Nope, it don't have a safety."

"Just don't shoot me in the head."

"What about in the butt?"

"You do and I'll throw you up on that ditchbank and beat the devil out of you."

"That might take you a while," I said.

On the opposing bank (the one he said he'd throw me on) he let me down, and we climbed its briar-infested slope, delicately straddled a barbed wire fence and walked with mud sucking steps into the woods where squirrels run like rats in the treetops. My father shot three in a relatively short time and put each one into the game pouch of his hunting vest.

"What if they keep on bleedin' once they're inside there?" I asked.

"Then I get a bloody shirt."

"I hope I get one," I said with dwindling optimism.

A woodpecker tapped against a tree, its sound more easily detected than its source. When I spotted him, I raised my gun and pulled the trigger. The ensuing blast sucked all hearing from my ears, drawing it violently away in a spontaneous vacuum. I flinched and nearly missed the bird's unexpected collapse from its perch. My shoulder burned from the recoil, but I remained cold faced and mumbled a blur of curses I had spray-painted on the school's back wall the week before.

My father stooped down and picked up the bird from among the roots which radiated like fingers from the tree's base. He carried the bird by its legs and held him up before me so I could see. "Woodpecker," he said and flung it away from us.

"Aren't you going to put it in the bag with the others?"

"I don't eat woodpeckers, do you?"

"No, I don't guess I do." I knew better than to ask. I knew before I pulled the trigger, before I even heard the sound like morse code, the sound that clicked with rhythm and purpose and then stopped abruptly, finally. I walked behind my father, who moved through the vines with quiet agility. My steps were loud and careless as I thought: *I killed it to see it dead*. The phrasing of guilt caused me to try and identify it as folly: *It doesn't matter. Not one bit. It was only a damn bird*.

The woods thinned out and walking became easier. A squirrel rushed across a limb and I managed to pick him off. He fell with his legs still scrambling and hit the ground, instantly scratching about in an attempted crawl. I instinctively grabbed his tail and swung him in a quick arc, against a rock where he became still.

"He's a nice one," my father said as he inspected the creature that lay especially large in my thin white hand, his billowing plume of tail now appearing to be no more than a thin whip, lightly feathered with scant gray and white hairs. That night we skinned him and the others, and the next evening my mother rolled the pink muscled bodies in flour and fried them.

"The dinner's good," I told my mother, and it was. But it was no more than

that, there was no great mystical connection to be made.

The older I got, the less I saw of my parents. This is completely normal, I'm told, and I gladly accepted a whole new set of acquaintances and habits. One of them was Gengis, who I still see from time to time. He remains in a type of physical suspension, forever and always looking the same as when I first met him, back when we were both fifteen. He came into my sixth period class one day, twenty minutes late for the class and two weeks into the semester. After breaking the sanctimonium of the teacher's discourse on subject-verb agreement by the very act of his boisterous entry, Gengis sat down. He folded himself into one of those chairs with the clipboard sized desktop attached to it. His entire two-hundred-and-some-odd-pound, nicotine stinking body nested in the fall heat directly beside me.

"Whaz' happenin'," he asked, his eyes intensely bloodshot and his wire coarse hair and beard flying out from his face and head, giving him the look of cuddled insanity.

"Nothin's happenin'," I said. What else could I say?

"It's cool," Gengis said just before he laughed his laugh, which isn't really a laugh at all, but two words spoken in a tone that is not quite spontaneous, usually somewhat guttural. "Heh-heh, Yer alright man. You get stoned?"

"Yeah. Sure," I caught a glimpse of the teacher, who eyed us stoically. His name was Mr. Finbaum and that day he was wearing penny loafers and a lavender shirt. Gengis speculated what his sexual preference might be as we smoked homegrown on his parents front porch later that day.

On another occasion I sat on the porch while Gengis played twelve bar blues on a Japanese guitar with a warped neck. The strings buzzed rather than resounded as he played the progression in eleven and a half or thirteen bars, always in the key of "E". I chain smoked and tossed half-spent Marlboro butts across the lawn in random patterns.

"Why don't you smoke those things on down?" Gengis asked, his fingers stopping on the strings and looking like fat pallid slugs.

"What-cho-say?" I asked, snapping back from a warmly fuzzed cloud of intoxication. We had been drinking whiskey.

"Why don't you smoke the thing on down and quit throwing them away?"

"You mean the cigarettes?"

"Of course I mean the damn cigarettes."

"Why should I?"

"Because all the good tar and stuff's down there," he said and pulled a smoldering cigarette from beneath the guitar strings that stretched from the tuning pegs on the headstock. After sucking it's length to ash, he descended the steps in a cloud of exhaled smoke. "Here cat," he called from the cement walk that had been painted white at his mother's request. "C'mon cat, where you at?"

I watched a miniature collie waddle out from under the porch. Gengis bent over and played with his ears. "Nice cat," he said. "C'mon boy," he added as he walked back up the steps with the dog following behind him. As he sat down on the porch swing, the dog began to scurry up his leg and finally sprawled out on his lap.

"Nice Cat-Dog-Smilely-Person," he said.

"Man, you got something twisted," I said. "You're the only one I know that would name a dog Cat. Now he's a smiley person too."

"Sure he is. He's a regular person just like you or me." Gengis picked up the dog

and cradled him so he'd sit up; his paws stuck out in front of him like the hands of sleepwalkers in T.V. comedies. "See that, he's just a little man." Smiley barked attentively. "That's what I'm talkin' about; he knows what I'm sayin'. See how he's smilin'.

"You'd smile too if you had a wrap around mouth like he's got," I said.

"Man, you're missing it. He's smart, just like us."

"Like who?"

"Let me show you. Give me a cigarette, bud." He spoke in his usual tone, never demanding, just leeching. I gave him a cigarette and a light. He smoked in deep quick puffs for a moment and then clinched the filter in his teeth.

He stared at the dog and then picked up a whiskey bottle from a rusty plant stand and held it near Smiley's nose. "Smiley like whiskey?" he asked. The dog barked mechanically. After replacing the bottle, Gengis pulled a moist pack of rolling papers from his shirt pocket and repeated the stunt saying, "Smiley like dope?" This time the dog not only barked, but wagged his tail responsively. "Smiley like cigarettes?" Gengis asked as he held the Marlboro to his nose. Smiley shook his head violently away, snorting and making annoyed hacking sounds.

Gengis grinned at me. "See, he's like us but smarter. He knows what's good for him, we don't."

"You're crazy," I said, "but let me see the little fella for a minute." I picked up Smiley and held him at arms length, the way parents hold babies in order to get a good look at them. "You're not people," I said, "but you're alright." Smiley wagged his tail contentedly.

After graduation, Gengis married a sixteen-year old girl. She stood beside him in the reception line, her child-like face resting in beautiful juxtaposition atop her compact and mature body. The white cloth of her wedding dress drew tight across the subtle, hinting roundness of her stomach.

"How'd you get such a fine lady?" I complemented as I shook Gengis's hand.

"Well, you know what they say. Ladies love outlaws, right babe?" he said to his wife who clutched admiringly at the coat of his rented tuxedo. The couple set up housekeeping in his parent's house about the same time that I moved out of mine.

I changed addresses a few times; it's easy to assume that a change of location is a change of heart. I got lucky. My heart changed even though it really had nothing to do with geography.

Standing on a street corner in Washington, D.C. I thought: *What am I doing here? Oh yeah... that's right..* And then it came to me and made perfect sense and I said out loud "Thank you, Lord!" A woman that was passing by, carrying a brief case, gave me a cold stare. At the time I was a street vendor selling Oriental imports; Wonderful Wicker, I called it.

On that day the sun glared hard on the cement sidewalks as I stood behind my stand. There was no wind. A frail, fashionably dressed man passed out leaflets across the street. Another cult, I assumed. The Hare Krishnas had been through earlier, banging on strange sounding instruments and chanting. A pleasant young man with the customary tuft of fuzz rising from his shaved head gave me a book with John Lennon's picture on it.

"Thank you," I said. I studied the cover and asked, "It's against your teachings to use drugs, isn't it?"

"Yes," the pink-robed man replied. "Krishna teaches purity of spirit."

"Then why's Lennon's picture on this thing? He did a lot of drugs. Isn't that sorta like General Motors putting a picture of a Datsun in one of their ads?"

He snatched the book from my hand and said, "Say Krishna."

"No thanks," I said, as he left.

When the fashionably dressed man walked across the street, he handed me one of his pamphlets without saying a word. It had a picture of a dog and a cat on it and explained that I should learn to be close to my pet. Doing so would draw me close to God, because "the breath of God is in the animals." 'How nice,' I thought. 'Who needs a preacher when you've got a dog?'

I looked up from the dull mimeographed print and smiled at the woman who picked gingerly at the merchandise on my stand. She had a rug shaped dog that sat in the shadow of my stand with its leash wrapped around one leg. I bent over and stroked the animal's thick fur. "You hot under all that stuff?" I asked. He panted heavily. Remembering what I had just read in the pamphlet, I leaned closer and whispered, "Prophecy, Fido." The dog looked up at me and drooled on my hand.

"Her name isn't Fido," the woman corrected.

"Of course it isn't," I said, wiping the back of my hand on my pants leg. She bought a woven rattan box and left me there to stand on the corner where I worked from 7-5, six days a week. I had read in Proverbs that I should take a lesson from the ant, who is a diligent creature even though it has no ruler. I had no boss, except for the rain, and therefore, I worked hard in order to show myself approved.

I returned to my hometown that fall, very tired, and moved into a house full of men who were referred to by our landlord as "nice, young Christian men." We always paid our rent on time. Usually there were seven of us, except for those who came and went. One of them was Howard, a vagabond hippie that we baptized in the great cast iron bathtub which sat on clawed feet in the upstairs bathroom. Besides getting wet, he ate Jello from coffee cups and talked endlessly of his travels until the day he left.

"God told me to leave and go to Florida," he said.

"Which god?" I asked.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I mean it's starting to get cold around here, isn't it?"

"That doesn't mean a thing. The highways calling me." Howard listened to country music and often spoke in yokelish phrases when he decided to make himself understood.

"Wanderlust is still lust. There's nothing noble about it," I said. Howard went upstairs, silent for the lack of another country song. I sat down in front of the television and watched the morning news. Our dog, a stray that had followed Howard home one rainy evening, sat on a throw rug. He was a gentle animal, of a strange and variant breed, that threw up on our dull hardwood floors because he refused dog chow and ate from the neighbors trashcans. Inevitably, he would always return to the puddle and lick up the remains, leaving only a stain and the scent of partially digested rubbish.

Howard reappeared with his backpack. "I'll write you guys sometime."

"Yeah, it'd be good to hear from you. Take care of yourself. If you die out there, there's no second time around."

"Sure," he said, leaving me and the dog with the television. I looked through the window and saw him disappear behind a tree with his hair blowing in the wind like a flag. It seemed that he was already dead and the thought disturbed me and seemed to make me tired still.

Joe Archaro manages the Shell station two blocks from my house. He is also a deacon in my church and is known for his sound advice on automotive, as well as spiritual matters. I sat at his desk in a back room at the station, among the metal shelves holding cases of motor oil and rebuilt generators.

"So you're tired and wonder why?" he said.

"Yep," I said, spinning a wingnut down the threads of a large greasy screw I'd become fascinated with.

"Well, you're a new creation in Christ just like the Word says, good buddy." Joe owned a C.B. radio. I have found that most gas station people do. He rocked back on his chair and propped his feet against the edge of his beatup metal desk. Then he pulled a rubber band out of his pocket and shot it at my chest. "Revelation!" he shouted as he stood up, the swiftness of his ascent leaving the chair rocking profoundly on the cement floor.

"Well, clue me in," I said.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles," he said, quoting the scripture with amazing diction. "You were meant to soar the winds of the spirit. Stop acting like you're dead and start flying." Joe moved his arms in wide, flapping gestures.

I put the screw on his desk and stood up. "Reckon I'll fly," I said and began moving my arms like wings. We grinned with child-like glee.

A young pump jockey wearing a Pabst Blue Ribbon baseball hat walked in. "Well, I'll be damned," he said. "I never knew that you people cut loose like that."

"There's a time for every purpose under heaven," Joe said.

It was now almost winter, but not terribly cold and a good day for walking. The trees that had formed shaded archways over the street in summer now clawed skyward in a skeletal network of bare limbs and branches. The street I traveled was not part of my usual route; I had come that way, down the street that Gengis lived on, hoping to casually drop by. A contrived circumstance seemed the least awkward way to visit an old friend that I hadn't seen for an unfriendly length of time.

The house looked the same as when I had last seen it, sitting squat and box-like as old houses tend to do. Gengis unloaded a truck load of firewood, stacking the split logs on a pile of colossal proportion. When he saw me he stopped and squinted at me and said, "Well, I'll be damned." As I walked up to him, he shook the gloves from his hands and lay them on the tailgate of the truck. He walked up and clutched my hand, shaking it in the thumbs-locked manner that is unacceptable in the world of business.

"Well, I'll be damned. Where you been?"

"Places," I said.

"Man, it's a trip to see ya. This calls for a buzz." There was a silence and then the swirling of leaves in the wind.

"Got any dope?" he asked.

"Nope, I quit getting stoned."

There was silence again, except for the leaves.

"Well, what do you do, get high on Jesus or something?" (His head moved from side to side with each word as if to mean "Well, La-Te-Da.")

"I guess you could say that."

"Somebody told me something like that about you, but I didn't think I was hearin' right. Just don't get to preachin' at me and we'll do fine. Religion bores the hell out of me."

"It'd be nice if I could, but I'm not talking about religion. Jesus said..."

Gengis was now back to me, hoisting wood into his thick arms. After placing it on the pile, he returned to the tailgate and put his work gloves back on, thrusting his hands into them in an exaggerated peremptory gesture.

"Could you use some help?" I asked.

"Sure 'nuff."

We unloaded the wood quickly; I passed the logs from the truck to Gengis, who placed them on the pile. Firewood was his business, I found out as we talked in short broken phrases, always maintaining the rhytm of moving wood. After the last split section of log was in place, Gengis said, "Follow me. I want to show you something."

We went back to the large wooden shed, which sat close to the house on the small lot. Inside, near the door was a cot that sat on bricks buried in the dirt floor.

"Somebody sleep here?" I asked.

"I do, but not much. Sometimes here's better than there," he said, pointing at the open door toward the house and smiling in a matter-of-fact way. Gengis walked to the back of the shed saying, "Check this out." A large cage constructed of plywood and wire screening sat on sawhorses against the wall. Within, there was a large bird that slowly unfolded his wings, stretching the tips impotently against the ends of the box. The stench of bird droppings began to register in my nostrils as I asked, "Where'd you get him?"

"Found him." Gengis found a lot of things. When we were in high school, he found a motorcycle. I wondered if the engine was still buried in a plastic trash bag beneath his mother's geraniums.

"What kind of bird is he?"

"A raven. Right bad lookin' bird, ain't he?"

"I just don't know about this, Gengis. I mean, a bird's supposed to fly. He's not goin' to do much of it in there."

"Aw, lighten up. I feed him good, besides that he can't fly anyhow."

"You couldn't fly either if you were stuck in a box all the time. He might as well be dead."

"It's not as bad as all that." Gengis pulled a piece of rope off a spool that lay on the workbench and struck a match. He singed the frayed end and put his nose close to the crumbling fibers, snorting the scant stinking fumes. "It's old rope, might be hemp. Want a hit?"

"No thanks."

He put the rope back on the bench with a customary laugh, "Heh-heh, you okay, man. Want something to drink?"

"That'd be good, I'm right thirsty."

We walked out the shed door and around to the front of the house where we treaded the familiar porch steps. I expected the warm flush of nostalgia, and it therefore eluded me. Setting had become something completely immaterial. Gengis opened the door, but did a quick about-face, pulling it softly and modestly shut behind him. "Wait here, the old lady's feedin' the kid. You want a rum and

Coke?"

"No thanks."

"Didn't think you would. I don't think we have no Coke anyhow."

"Water'd be fine."

The word *water* reminded me of a Bible verse about Living Water and I smiled at Gengis as he slipped through the door. I sat down on the porch swing and felt the slats through my jeans, cool and wooden against my thighs and I thought: *Feeding the kid. He's still a baby. I haven't been gone as long as it seems. Time has lagged pathetically behind all the changes....* It occurred to me that times and places, things which are seen or measured concretely, are the substance of a feeble anchor on a long rope which draws taut only as a reminder of flesh, the weight that is dropped from the spirit in the way that a man sheds his overcoat in the presence of a warm, pure flame of fire.

I looked out on the yard and saw the oak tree standing bare as gristled bone. Then my eyes roamed skyward, to where the wind moved through the branches of a tall adjacent pine, a tree that is green in season and out of season, bearing the peculiar conical fruit of its species.

My mother's voice became clear in my mind. She speaks at times with the naive colloquial profundity of women in old movies about the South: "Son, there's things you can do for yourself and things you can't. And there's things you can tell others and other things they won't let you."

Well, Ma, someday Gengis and I will go back to the shed and talk. But we won't let the bird go because Gengis was right and so was I; dead birds don't fly. Death doesn't necessarily mean that breathing and eating an all those things stop, you know. But I'll bring him a new bird, an eagle, and I'll let Gengis release him and we'll watch him rise up on wide, effortless wings, soaring higher and higher toward the clouds heavy with rain and violence. With both of us looking up I'll say, "Gengis, if you get high enough you can always see the sun."

* * *

Memories, strange little things like the Scarlet O'Hara voice of my mother, have seeped into my brain like water through a basement wall and lay in ever-widening puddles. Sunlight pours through a small window in this cellar of my mind. It glints across one of these pools of reflection, the one containing Mr. Finbaum, who taught me high school English. Within this puddle, in a bright little bubble, it is a spring day and we are in an empty classroom. I stand beside him, my thumbs locked in my beltloops, slouching in my casual and stoned adolescence. He sits at this desk, his immaculate lavender shirt sleeves folded across his chest. My term paper is centered on the desktop before him, and he turns and looks up over his reading glasses at me.

"Your paper has its strong points," he says. "But it lacks cohesiveness. A summary would have most definitely been in order."

The word *cohesiveness* floats into my THC-laden head. Summarization surges through vessels and veins and finally lodges somewhere in the fatty tissues of my brain. It remains, even years after I come down...

(I like animals. Birds are best of all, especially eagles. They remind me of who I am.)



— Teresa Clair Novack

Concurrence

("I wished, all the mild days of middle March..." Berryman, Sonnet 1)

In this your room, room full of women
we cannot be alone; present are those
gone (one a pillar of smoke by the window,
one moving near the bed, one always
by the door, one as if reading
in your large armchair) that chant
to me in an inaudible hum:

these walls do not protect you,
your skin not impermeable
we infuse your present body
with our absent selves, line
the inside of your mouth
with the dusks of our vitality that *she* knew
before you even thought to know
this room, the walls, her skin
or yours.

— Kristin Zimmer



— *Ki Ho Park*

Looking For The Entrance

The opposite wall fades last light

I see

the battery's last juice

The skin above my eyes

smooths over seals

to the cheek

First time I understand light

in the cave

waving a dead flashlight

Standing still the walls are gone

the fissure slit

splits my feet straddle

bridging the gap that swallows

the words I speak

All this gone

There is just me

not even a body

just these thoughts

rifled yells

swarming the dark

I am thick dipped in syrup

held left to drip steady

hold my place

From the match down in my pocket

I see again

how rugged the walls lean

the crevice still black through my legs

Map a path of matchlight shadows

and memorize

the steps I take

till again eyes seal shut

ears reach for change in the still hush

Stopping to light another match

I stoop for the stretch of stone

that will hold my back in darkness

even in sleep

— Tom White



— Ana M. Lazo

Untitled

— *Van Ly*

There was a small female bird who would give her life for her children. Duong Nga was the name of this bird which made its nest among the Conoco trees along the Mekong River. She usually gave birth to her children at the beginning of the Winter. The Winter days, cold and windy, made most of the locusts disappear; Duong Nga had to fly all day to find food. In the coldest days of winter, when she was too weak to fly far away, she tore her body's meat to feed the little birds. The blood slowly covered her blue fur; she died in the nest. The children continued to eat their mother's meat. One day in the spring, warm and shining, they flew away. •



— Ben Cornatzer

The Watercolor

How rivers round rocks. But think of it,
how rocks resemble eyes, the world a watercolor.

The sky, being blue beyond belief
blusters through the days, arranges kites for me
then blows my hat away

With the sudden sweep of an afterthought
I, holding a bouquet of kites, remember.

Most were immediate carnations.

They blush and bloom their war across the sky.

Their hair sails and freaks its melody.

The branches are all bones with women.

Meadows between my toes are clumps of hair.

The myth of green.

Once, I saw a frog leap and it was a meadow.

I chased the meadow with less than a thought,
more than thinking.

I heard of green and it was true.

The leaping of love, I heard it, then daylight
came leaping, with brushes of weather,
from bottles of blue.

My heart flew crazy like a balloon, and escaped.

Or it sputtered like a lung.

Either way, it was hilly with rainbows,
and on the run, when the sky
grew gruff and growling, blacking out the sun.

Blacking out my spinning kite.

— *Tomás Martín*



— *Lyle Alexander*

—Joanne Anthony

Joshua watched his brother Moshebe come down the road. Joshua stood in the field, leaning on his staff, and his brother noticed how tall and graceful he had become. His left hand resting on the stick that hit the ground at an angle, left hip leaning toward it, and his other leg pointing away from his body. He looked like a young woman, posed there.

And Joshua eyed his older brother from the time it took him to appear on the peak of the hill to when they met. Moshebe had on his townman clothes— a black hat, too small for his head, a white shirt with its sleeves cut off above the wrist, a dark knit vest and charcoal woolen slacks, also too tight, showing off his build as a white man wouldn't do. Joshua thought of an ostrich when he saw his brother walk stiff-legged toward him.

"My big man Joshua. How are you?" Moshebe asked after he put his arm on the other's shoulder. "And your goats?" he said with a laugh.

"I have trouble keeping them on our land. It is so dry, they must go all over the hills to look for something to eat." Joshua's big eyes and shapely, pouting lips made him look younger than fourteen.

"It will rain soon," Moshebe assured him, as they started to walk toward the circle of dome-topped huts a mile away. Dust rose up around them, and the sky ran from rich blue to a lighter blue, never turning white even at the horizon. "They say so in Johannesburg. The whiteys on the television."

Moshebe showed him the umbrella that he bought one night in the city on his way back from the bar. He worked all day building railroads and spent his nights in the bar with the other workers. They slept all in one room, fifty bunks with barely a place to stand up between them.

"You look funny coming down the road, Moshebe. And that dress and hat you brought back for mother, she wears them sometimes, and she looks like a monkey with clothes on." The two brothers laughed. "She put them on after she came back from the fields one day, and she wouldn't make us anything to eat." She sat on the only chair in the hut, with her legs together, her hands on her knees, and she told her family to get her something nice to eat. She said, "Tonight I am the Queen of England."

When the brothers got near the hut, they saw their sister Dinuba sitting outside on the plastic chair. When she noticed Moshebe, she jumped up and ran to meet him. "What have you brought for me, brother? Jewels. A piece of cloth. A pink play baby?" She ran through the list of toys he had brought her on other visits. He handed her a pair of black sneakers and she dropped down on the ground and put them on.

"Where are father and mother, Dinuba?" Moshebe asked her.

"Inside, with the sangoma. He's throwing the bones. Father wants to know if it will rain soon," she said, trying to do something with the white cords that stuck out of holes on the tops of her shoes. "What is this?" she whined. Her hands fell to the dirt and she looked up at Moshebe. "Do this, Moshe. You gave them to me, so do it."

He kneeled down to tie them. "You will never be a townwoman. You are too stupid, Dinuba."

He stood up and headed toward the hut with Joshua. When they entered, father and mother looked up, and then down again at the bones scattered on the

mat in front of the diviner. Moshebe lit a cigarette and stood near the door, listening.

The sangoma had black eyes and reddish hair that was matted and tied in bunches with pieces of colored yarn. He was a little man that reminded Moshebe of a rat. He thought the sangoma was mad and hated to see father waste time with him.

"The bones say no rain, Makhele. No rain and no harvest. Bad bones, but that's what they say. Throw them again? It will take money."

"No, not today, Lusaka. We will just wait and see. Throwing the bones won't bring rain," father said.

When the sangoma left, father turned to Moshebe. "How are you, Moshebe?" he asked.

"Good. But very tired. Father, why do you listen to the sangoma? You know he is always wrong."

"Oh, we do not need to talk about the sangoma. He will be wrong, and it will rain, and Joshua's goats will have a feast of grass. But now tell us about the city. We want to know. Soon Joshua might join you there. Has he shown you his strong arms and legs?"

Moshebe took a smoke on his cigarette and held it in. He looked at his father and shook his head. When he let his breath out, he said, "Not yet, don't send him to the city yet. The land is a better boss than the white man. Let Joshua stay."

"But if there is no harvest, what will we live on?"

Joshua stood up and walked outside. It was dusk, and he headed toward his goats that flecked the hills. He thought of the city and what Moshebe told him before about the black women there. Women who put magic cream on their faces to turn them white. He thought of the naked white women Moshebe showed him in a magazine once. White breasts. Different from the breasts of village women he'd seen. He wanted to touch the white ones— they were made to look so soft in the photographs. Ishanda— her breasts are like that, only darker, he thought.

Joshua remembered the last time he had seen the village girl. He was herding the goats, wearing the outfit Moshebe had brought back to him from Johannesburg. A red shirt and pants with white fringe on them. Ishanda was playing alone in the field below, and he ran down to meet her. When he got close to her, he put his hands behind his back and walked toward her, leaning and swaying from side to side. "Howdy, ma'am," he said to her. She stood still until she saw who it was, then she put her hand over her mouth and started to laugh.

"Howdy, there, ma'am," Joshua tried once more and kicked up dust. She had taken her shirt off in the heat, and just wore a pair of shorts. Joshua wished he had on his shorts instead of the red cowboy suit. He looked at her tiny breasts and wanted to take off his shirt and rub their chests together.

Ishanda pointed at his pants and he thought she was making fun of the white fringe on the outside of the legs. But when he looked down he noticed his buttons were undone and the very tip of his penis was poking out of his pants. He looked up at Ishanda, his eyes huge, and ran toward home.

Now as he walked back toward the hut, he watched some elephants in the distance with a crowd of egrets at their feet. With their white tusks for whiskers and the white birds for paws, Joshua thought the elephants looked like the cats in the village. He walked over to where his goats were searching for something to eat, and he got on his hands and knees and crawled around beside them. He nibbled on a few pieces of grass that he plucked out from the ground with his teeth, and his neck started to hurt. "You poor goats. Don't you get tired of bending your necks to look for food? But you have to keep looking. I don't want to see you get skinny and die." He had seen the bones of some of his sheep left by lions, and

watched once from a distance as a snake put the head of a pig into its mouth. "You must eat, so you can run away from the snake. It will come up beside you and spit at you and swallow you whole, if you don't run."

That night Moshebe and father sat on mats and drank dark village beer. Moshebe filled the hut with smoke so Joshua had trouble falling to sleep. Moshebe told stories about Johannesburg and the men he lived with there. Joshua listened and wondered if he would be able to handle the heavy tools Moshebe had to raise above his head and slam down into the earth. He wondered if he would change the way his brother had. He didn't want to leave.

The next morning before anyone else was awake, he started out to the low hills running. He picked up his legs and thought of them turning in a circle. He imagined that they were pushing and lifting him forward, and he was riding them effortlessly. He felt his muscles working. His arms churned along with his legs, and they rotated like the rods that guide the wheels of a train. His neck held his head straight up, and he wasn't watching the ground. He tripped on something and fell, hitting his head on a rock.

When he woke up, it took him a moment to remember. I must have tripped over a dead thorn tree, or a dead goat, he thought. He didn't want to see it. He just lay there in the tall grass, feeling his ankle throb.

Then he felt something move around his other leg and he turned to look behind him. He saw blue eyes slit vertically like the eyes of a cat— snake eyes— at the back of his knee. His calf was covered by its brown and green and yellow scales. It must be three times as big as I am, Joshua thought. He tried to scramble away with his free leg, but gouging pain in his ankle made him stop.

He saw the rock he struck his head on and he stretched his arm to grab it but it was just out of reach. The beast tickled his thigh as its scales moved across his skin. He kicked his leg around to shake it off, but it was wound once around his ankle, and it held on.

He knew how to kill a snake. He had done it before— when they got too close to his goats. His father taught him how to hit them on the top of their heads, in a spot just below the skull, and they would die in an instant. The same way you kill a sick goat. If he could reach the stone, he could kill this snake.

His leg grew warm as the muscles of the beast contracted and released, contracted and released. Joshua knew it was a constrictor, a python. He had seen smaller ones before with the same dark green and brown camouflage design, the brown patches traced in yellow. It won't poison me, he thought, just wind itself around me till I can't breathe. One long tube of muscle.

He felt its skin against his own body's heat and wetness. His heart pounded against the ground, his head beat like a second heart. The scales scratched his skin as it moved up his thigh to his back.

The tips of his fingers touched the rock and he used his hurt leg to push himself forward just enough to grab it in his hand. He turned around and started hitting the snake with the stone, but so wildly that he missed the spot on its head. It was riled and bit Joshua in the thigh. He looked at the teeth marks and the blood beading on his leg. I must aim carefully, or I'll make it so mad it will kill me, he thought.

He was covered in snake now and he struggled to catch his breath. He looked at the place beneath its skull and raised the rock. Just as he struck its head, it took another bite of his flesh. He dropped the rock and rolled over to try to get it back. The snake was biting him all over his chest now. "I hit the spot, so why won't you die," he screamed.

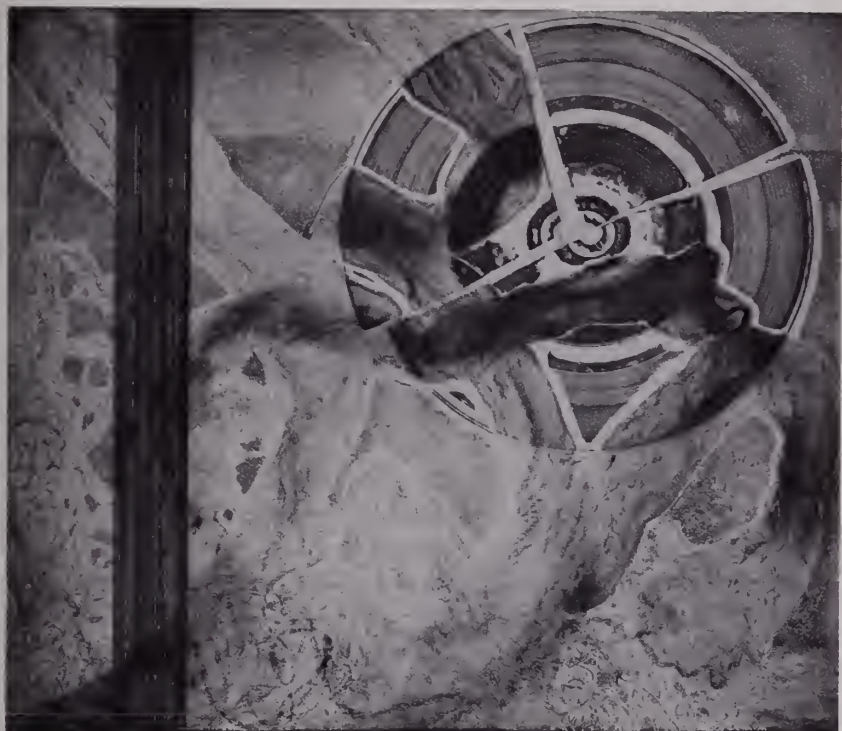
Joshua grabbed the snake's head and it bit his hand, but he didn't let go. He brought it to his mouth and bit down hard on the spot. His teeth hit the skull, and

he tasted blood, meat, bone. Scales rubbed against his tongue. He wanted to vomit out the beast but his jaw held firm and he dug deeper with his front teeth. He felt something pop in its head as he bit through a thick, rubbery cord. He knew he'd found the spot and killed the snake. It stopped moving and the boy let loose his teeth. Its head dropped out of his mouth and coil by coil fell from his body, letting him breathe, letting his blood move back down into his leg. He rolled away from it and closed his eyes.

A breeze passed over his wet skin and chilled him. He listened to the grasses moving, blades of tall, dry grass rubbing against one another. A breeze, Joshua thought, that is a change. He opened his eyes and saw a flock of black birds flying above, and a bank of white clouds moving toward him. Rain. Maybe the sangoma will be wrong again.

He turned his head toward the snake. The coils had straightened out into a long stiff green and brown rod patched with red— Joshua's blood and its own blood.

One less snake to hurt my goats, he thought. And if the rain comes we will see the hills turn green, and the goats get fat again. And I will be here to feel the rain fall onto my face, and I will run around the hills, with only my shorts on.



—Don Norwood

*Letter to Myra Sklarew,
Visiting Mekounida,
on the island of Evvoia, in Greece*

Lost Valley
Montague, Michigan
7 July, 1982

Dear Myra, in one of the fifteen houses of that high village
you need: by now you would join the lamentation
of ancient women sighing dark as shawls
to think I had sent the postman and his donkey
struggling up that dusty mountain path
from the little harbor at Karystos all the way up
only to say *how are you I am fine we miss you here.*

This must be worth his hire. I pray to God the ding
of goatbells and a closer hum of bees in dill
will make light of the way this note must climb.
I pray for the donkey's feet, for three faithful hands
at least that will cross the postman a blessing,
for cold water up the way that tastes of stone,
for a breeze and a hush of wine back down to Karystos.

And now it feels so ancient and good to pray aloud
like a peasant I also pray for rain to lay quick hands
on dust, for the strong green breath of onions in high fields.
Peace to the sheep who graze in rocks. May olive trees
push thick and heavy up the tilted yards and groves,
let lutes tonight and sleep twine deep as candlelight
in vines, Lord make the cheese turn gently in the crocks.

From the Great Lakes I have this to report: our swamp that went almost dry behind the dune is back this year. Down here the bullfrogs snap their banjo strings all night, and crickets twitch. Machines knocked down the oldest house in town, the blacksmith's shop. We're meeting in the small white church to try to stop the bomb. At dawn just after a storm, near the shore, I saw a scarlet tanager ignite black pine — this highpriest without camouflage who still

survives in light. But what I must tell you most: I saw the way light leans into the greenstain side of a shipwrecked beam and it made me feel something about the weather of which a nervous laugh is only a modern translation. The moon had been eclipsed, there had been that storm, and then this other light, this almost microscopic whelming. Something is wrong. Tell me if you feel the trembling there above Karystos. Love.

— *Rod Jellema*

Contributors

• Kristin Zimmer is a graduate student in English • Steven Young “the good life” • Stanley Wong enjoys music numbers and architecture • Rhonda Williams teaches in the Department of Housing and Applied Design • Tom White knows the inside of a mortise lock • J. Steven Taylor is a geology major • David Swerdlow is *Calvert's* editor • Donn Starr studies advertising design • Rose Solari is *Calvert's* poetry editor • Ray Sikes is a born-again Christian with no political affiliation • David Petersen, an ex-Insect Surfer, is not a hemophiliac • Ki Ho Park “life is like a toilet bowl” • Teresa Clair Novack is an advertising major • Don Norwood likes to sleep late • Lisa McCullogh is a graduate student in English • Cynthia Matsakis is *Calvert's* assistant poetry editor • Tomas Martin is a philosophy major • Jackie MacMillan would rather be painting in San Francisco • Saundra Maley co-edits Sibyl-Child Press • Van Ly is a Vietnamese student • Ana M. Lazo is the V.P. of the International Graphics Inc. student chapter • Kurt Kuss studies English • Joyce Kornblatt teaches English and creative writing; her first book, *Nothing To Do With Love*, was published by Viking Press • Albert Kapikian is a psychology major • Rod Jellema teaches creative writing; he is currently in Friesland translating poetry • Gerry Hinds likes to work with light • Margo Fisher, *Calvert's* art editor, likes junk yards • Jay Dougherty is a graduate student in English • Pete Dodge is a manic depressive who, when his condition is in regression, writes for the *Diamondback* • Laura Dickinson has not lived long enough to have a bio. • Ben Cornatzer, *Calvert's* assistant art editor, lives in a fraternity • Mitchell Coffey concluded that Tolstoy's first novel was much too long • J. Douglas Cox is a linebacker for the UM football team • Kim Chappel is a journalism major • Joanne Anthony is a graduate student in English • Roger Allen's spirit is imprisoned in the body of a Health Education professor • Lyle Alexander “a picture is but a moment” • Ruth Abramowitz studies poetry •

